

## Choice Book Assignments Spring Semester

“Sometimes, you read a book and it fills you with this weird evangelical zeal, and you become convinced that the shattered world will never be put back together unless and until all living humans read the book.” John Green

### Student Focus:

Choose a valuable work of fiction or nonfiction to read with an academic purpose. Your literary selection should reveal an understanding and commentary on the historical/cultural progress, triumphs, failures/struggles/flaws, of our American country while conveying the perceptions and experiences of the American authors. After you choose your text, read it, annotate, and analyze the literary merit.

### Important Dates

- April 1: choice book assigned to students in class
- April 13: book choice decision bring book to class
- April 14: groups formed for part two by teacher
- April 15: groups announced
- April 15-- work on part two individually; students will read, annotate, and work on part two and part three. This is an individual assignment and not a group grade. Do not delay on these steps.
- May 6: Turn in Annotated book (part one)
- May 6: Turn in the MLA printed document (part two & three)
- May 6-8: Socratic discussion (part four)

### Part One: Due May 6th (25 points)

1. Required annotations of 5 chapters/sections:

As in our previous choice book study during first semester, you will select five chapters for annotating in your text *from varying areas that span the entire novel*.

However, for this annotation assignment, your chapters must reflect a literary purpose.

For example:

- theme, setting, characterization(s), conflict, point of view
- symbolism/motif/satire/etc.
- imagery,
- tone, diction

There are various ways to do this: write in your text, use sticky notes, pdf annotations, Word comments, diigo.com for online texts & ebooks.

Annotations are more than just summaries that you might find on Sparknotes or other such sites (yes, summaries are important too, but move beyond this level); rather, your annotations should focus on literary investigation/merit/terms/purpose.

You will turn in your book for an annotation check on May 4th.

I will check your annotations and return your book to you.

### **Part Two (process): Due May 6th**

1. For part two of the choice book requirement, you will investigate the term “literary merit”.
2. After your investigation, you will create and write an original formal definition for the term “literary merit”.
3. Next, create and write 10 criteria that are necessary to defend the term “literary merit”.  
For example, one of your criterion might include:  
*reveals social, political, religious, and/or gender commentary, etc.*  
This is just a sample. Continue creating your own criteria.
4. Preparation: after you decide your definition and the criteria, you should use the book to find passages, quotes, chapters, etc., to defend your criteria and prove the book is a work of literary merit. Ideally, you will probably use part one for this step. Keep in mind, the book could have flaws. You should consider discussing these flaws as a distraction from the idea of “literary merit”.  
*For example, consider...why is The Great Gatsby a revered literary text? What makes the novel worthy of literary merit? As you create your own definition and the criteria, you will then defend the term with your choice book in a small group discussion for the class.*

### **Part Three (product): Due May 6th (50 points)**

1. Individually, you will write:
  - a formal & original definition for “ literary merit”. You cannot plagiarize an already existing definition. Read several if necessary, then formulate your own definition: DO NOT PLAGIARIZE.
  - the 10 criteria
  - then choose a minimum of 5 criteria and provide varying examples (at least 2 per criterion) from the text using thorough, well-constructed explanations & parenthetical citations
2. Print your answer in an MLA produced written document.

### **Part Four: Due May 6th-8th (25 points)**

1. Socratic Discussion: at this point in the school year, you should be well versed in how to participate in and conduct an academic discussion of a literary text.
2. All participants are leaders, knowledgeable, active, prepared, speaking, listening, and engaged throughout the discussion
3. The purpose of the discussion is three-fold: to consider/debate various ways of defining and evaluating literary merit; to discuss how the books read by members in your group measure up to these definitions; and to examine how the books read by members in the group help to illuminate ideas about American identity and society.
4. Use of the literary text is required, and frequent references to specific details in the text are crucial
5. If you are unsure as to what to say, then create a detailed list of all of the points (questions, page references, anything that relates to an academic discussion of a literary text, etc.) you want to discuss and turn that into me. However, participating in the discussion is required.
6. 20 minutes

